

## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING - Tip Sheet

### Internships ■ Co-ops ■ Summer/Part-time Jobs Work-Study/Campus Jobs ■ Practicums ■ Externships/Shadowing

#### DEFINITION

Experiential learning essentially means learning through experience and observation. These opportunities allow students to experience a problem or situation, learn from the experience, and apply that learning to new problems or situations in a “real world” setting. Experiential learning opportunities take place in a variety of ways. While definitions can vary among different schools and employers, a few general definitions are included below:

- **Internships** - An internship is usually a one-time work or service experience completed by a student who has gained at least some academic preparation in their professional field. The student works under the supervision of at least one practicing professional. Internships can be paid or unpaid. Many students opt to apply for academic credit for the internship experience. For more information about receiving credit, refer to the Academic Internship Program Tip Sheet. Internships that do not receive academic credit may still be eligible for SET credit. Please see the Career Center for more details.
- **Co-ops** - Cooperative education experiences are usually completed by a student over more than one semester. Students typically alternate semesters of full-time class study and semesters of full-time major-related employment. Most co-op programs are paid and involve academic credit. Note: Although RMU does not have a formal co-op program, some positions listed by employers as co-op may be available to students as an internship experience.
- **Summer/Part-time Jobs** - These positions involve a work relationship between student and employer. The student is paid to provide work or service to the employer for a position that is seasonal or requires less than full-time hours. Many summer and part-time jobs can relate to a student’s major and provide experiential learning opportunities. Part-time and summer jobs are posted online through ColonialTRAK.
- **Work-Study/Campus Jobs** - These jobs are paid positions and typically take place on campus. While some are not related to academic majors, these jobs can provide experiential learning opportunities. Federal work-study or university student payroll funding may be required by some campus employers. Some Federal work-study positions are also available off campus at community service organizations. For more information, refer to the Student Employment Program Tip Sheet.
- **Practicums** - A practicum is typically a one-time work or service experience completed by a student as part of an academic class or major requirement. Almost all practicums are completed for academic credit. They can be paid or unpaid experiences.
- **Externships/Shadowing** - These experiences provide students an opportunity to observe a professional on the job. They are not paid and usually are not completed for academic credit. Externships/shadowing experiences can last from one day to several weeks in duration.

#### BENEFITS

- Test out different career options by gaining firsthand experience
- Learn more about a particular occupation or industry
- Apply classroom learning to the “real” world
- Provide experiences to help build your resume
- Meet professionals in your field of interest and develop networking contacts

## SEARCH PROCESS

### 1. Decide what kind of positions you are interested in.

- Look through sample listings to spark interest and learn what types of positions exist.
- Look through the Career Resource Guide for your major to learn about career options. Career Resource Guides are available in the Career Center and on the website.
- Browse through a variety of career options books available in the Career Library.
- Make an appointment with your career coach to discuss interests.
- Consider taking an interest inventory at the Career Center.

### 2. Research career fields and employers of interest.

- Research employers using ReferenceUSA, available online through the RMU Library.
- Use Internet resources including specific employers' home pages.
- Use additional resources including Career Center books and employer directories.
- Talk to people working in your field(s) of interest. Ask Career Center staff members and professors for suggestions.
- Join the Robert Morris University Career Network, a LinkedIn group that provides an opportunity for RMU students, alumni, faculty and staff to connect with each other about career-related topics  
<http://tinyurl.com/cxqtfk3>

### 3. Prepare your resume and cover letter.

- Refer to the Resume Writing and Employment Letters Tip Sheets.
- Meet with your career coach in the Career Center to have them critiqued.
- Upload your resume into ColonialTRAK.
- Remember to tailor your resume and cover letter to the position for which you are applying. Make it clear how your skills and background are a good match for the position and employer. (You already know about the employer and what skills are needed, thanks to the research you completed in step #2!)

### 4. Apply for positions that interest you.

## SEARCH STRATEGIES

### 1. Internet Sites

#### Internships:

ColonialTRAK (positions entered by the Career Center)

[www.rmu.edu/careercenter](http://www.rmu.edu/careercenter)

Log in to your ColonialTRAK profile.

- On the ColonialTRAK menu bar, click the Job Search link and select “Internships” as the “Position Type.” You can also do an “Advanced Search,” entering search criteria including, for example, major, job category and/or location. A more general search is also recommended, since some organizations do not completely enter various search criteria fields.
- **Search Tip:** Once you select “Search” and your results appear, you may want to set up a job search agent by clicking on the “Email me new jobs” button above the search results. By completing this section, new internships that meet your criteria will be emailed to you each day new postings are added to RMU’s ColonialTRAK system.
- When searching for internships, the initial search results page will feature postings entered by the RMU Career Center. Depending on the selections you made in your registration profile, you may also have access to internships posted through national sites.
- A few employers also opt to interview on-campus for internship candidates. To view these internship opportunities, click on “On-Campus Interviews” on the ColonialTRAK menu bar.

## Internet Sites (continued)

Go Government: Students and Entry-Level Job Seekers

[www.gogovernment.org/government\\_careers/students\\_entry-level\\_talent.php](http://www.gogovernment.org/government_careers/students_entry-level_talent.php)

Idealist.org

[www.idealist.org](http://www.idealist.org)

Indeed

[www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com)

Internships.com

[www.internships.com](http://www.internships.com)

Pathways for Students & Recent Graduates to Federal Careers

[www.usajobs.gov/studentsandgrads](http://www.usajobs.gov/studentsandgrads)

Pittsburgh Technology Council

[www.pghtech.org](http://www.pghtech.org) and <http://pghcareerconnector.com>

The Washington Center for Internships & Academic Seminars

[www.twc.edu](http://www.twc.edu)

## Work-study/Campus Jobs

Student Employment Program (SEP)

[www.rmu.edu/careercenter](http://www.rmu.edu/careercenter)

- Work-study jobs are posted in ColonialTRAK. To view all available work-study jobs, click “Job Search” on the ColonialTRAK main menu bar, select “Work-Study/Student Employment Program” under “Position Type” and click “Search”.
- Please refer to the Student Employment Program Tip Sheet for additional information on how to complete your Student Employment Program application, upload your application into ColonialTRAK, and set your ColonialTRAK profile to ensure campus employers are able to view it.
- To discuss opportunities available off campus, please contact the Career Center at 412-397-6333 to schedule an appointment with the Student Employment Program Coordinator.

## Part-time Jobs

ColonialTRAK

[www.rmu.edu/careercenter](http://www.rmu.edu/careercenter)

- Local employers often contact the Career Center to post part-time positions. These positions are included in ColonialTRAK under the “Job Search” tab. Please note that these positions may not be related to academic majors.

## 2. Newspapers, Trade and Professional Journals

- Apply to position announcements posted in newspapers and professional publications.
- Ask professors for field-specific recommendations.
- Refer to the Career Resource Guides for listings of professional associations and periodicals.

## 3. Conduct a targeted resume mailing/phone campaign.

- Identify employers of interest by using ReferenceUSA, available online through the RMU Library, employer directories and other library resources. You may also receive leads from people you know (professors, family, friends, etc.). If targeting a specific city, don't forget to use local phone books, regional directories, general area Internet searches and information from the Chamber of Commerce.

- Call the employers to inquire about possible positions and to verify to whom you should direct your correspondence.
- Send the employer a tailored resume and cover letter. (Refer to the Resume Writing Tip Sheet and the Employment Letters Tip Sheet.) Send resumes first to employers who have indicated that they currently have a position available. For those who are not currently hiring, when you have time, you may still want to send a resume to be kept on file in case a position does become available.
- About 5-7 business days after you send your information, call the employer to follow-up. This action shows interest, initiative, and sets you apart from other candidates.

#### **4. Speak with networking contacts to learn about career-related information and leads.**

- Start with people you know: parents, friends, parents' friends, other family members, doctors, dentists, and neighbors--anyone you know. Let them know what types of positions you are looking for.
- Join the Robert Morris University Career Network, a LinkedIn group that provides an opportunity for RMU students, alumni, faculty and staff to connect with each other about career-related topics. Go to <http://tinyurl.com/cxqtfk3>
- Consider joining a professional association and attending local meetings. Refer to the Career Resource Guide for your major to explore a list of relevant professional associations.
- Consider joining professionally focused clubs and organizations on campus and attending meetings. Ask other members about their internship and job experiences. You can find a listing of RMU organizations in Student Life or online at <http://studentlife.rmu.edu/student-activities/activities-and-student-organizations>.
- Follow-up with your networking contacts periodically.
- Refer to the Networking Tip Sheet for more detailed information.

#### **5. Watch for job and career fairs held on and off campus.**

- Refer to the "Events" link on ColonialTRAK for a list of upcoming job fairs and networking events.
- Research the employers who will be attending the fair.
- Practice how you will introduce yourself.
- Make sure your resume is perfect and then print copies on quality paper.
- Refer to the Job Fair Tip Sheet for helpful tips on making the most of a job fair.

#### **6. Set up an externship/shadowing experience.**

- Ask Career Center staff, academic advisors, faculty, and networking contacts for suggestions.
- Informational interviews are a great way to explore possible sites. Refer to the Informational Interviewing Tip Sheet for more details.

#### **7. Consider volunteering with a nonprofit organization.**

- Use the ReferenceUSA database to identify nonprofit organizations.
- Contact the Office of Student Civic Engagement, located in the Nicholson Center.
- Look for nonprofits in your industry or field to gain relevant experience and make networking contacts.
- Become involved in volunteer opportunities sponsored by clubs or organizations to which you belong.

#### **8. Consider working for temporary employment agencies.**

Temporary jobs provide an opportunity to earn money, gain experience, and make networking contacts.

- Investigate agencies and ask about job options.
- Verify if any fees will be charged for services before you accept or sign anything.
- Refer to the "Employment Agencies" section of the "Job Search Strategies" tip sheet for additional details.

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

**Career Center Home Page:** [www.rmu.edu/careercenter](http://www.rmu.edu/careercenter) (Student section)

- **ColonialTRAK** - for access to part-time jobs, work-study jobs, internships, full-time job postings, on-campus recruiting opportunities, and graduate assistantships.
- **Academic Internship Program** - provides more information about the program as well as links to related policies and required forms.
- **Student Employment Program** - provides a link to the Student Employment Program Tip Sheet and application.

**Career Resource Guides** (available on the Career Center website and in hard copy in the office)

Available for each major, these guides provide information about career options, periodicals of interest, professional associations, career information and job listing websites, clubs and organizations, salary information, and a sampling of RMU internship sites and full-time employers.

**Career Center Tip Sheets** (available on the Career Center website and in hard copy in the office)

- Academic Internship Program
- Employment Letters
- Government Job Search
- Informational Interviewing
- Interviewing
- Job Fair
- Job Search Strategies
- Networking
- ReferenceUSA
- Resume Writing
- Student Employment Program